

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

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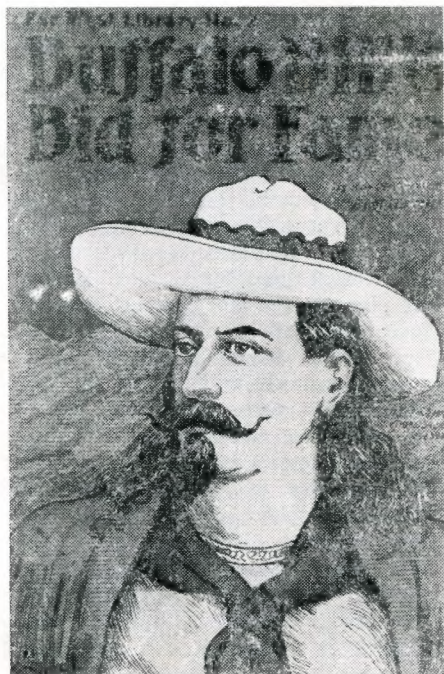
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## THE DETECTIVE STORIES OF EDWARD S. ELLIS

By Denis R. Rogers



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## THE DETECTIVE STORIES OF EDWARD S. ELLIS

By Denis R. Rogers

When one reads about the many detective stories published in the United States between the Civil War and the First World War, the name of Edward S. Ellis occurs only rarely. A recent check of Ellis' large output, however, revealed that approximately eleven and a half per cent of his major works featured one or more detectives.

Ellis' literary career began, so far as is known, with the publication of a poem in Ballou's *Dollar Monthly* in September 1857. His first major work, "Dick Flinton; or, Life on the Border" appeared under two years later in Amos J. Williamson's "New York Dispatch," serialization starting on March 5, 1859, when the young teacher was one month short of his nineteenth birthday.

From the outset Ellis was a prolific writer, nearly all his early tales being about frontier life or the wars with Great Britain. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the first two detective tales from Ellis' pen were linked with border adventures. In "The Marked Bullet," issued as No. 1 of Beadle's *Dime Fiction* on November 15, 1864, the detection was connected with an alleged murder at an Ohio house-rising; and "The Web of Fate," serialized in George W. Childs' "Philadelphia Home Weekly" during November and December 1866 linked a detective's pursuit of a bank robber with life on the prairies.

Ellis' long connection with "Saturday Night" began in June 1869 with "The Prairie Outlaws," in which, again, detectives pursue the villain out west. Shortly afterwards, in September 1869, serialization of the first of Ellis' many railroad stories commenced in "Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper" and, as in the majority of its successors, a detective was one of the characters.

The rise in popularity of the detective story marched side by side with the increasing urbanization of the United States, until, in the 1880s, such stories had taken over pride of place in the story papers from the frontier tale.

The first great success of this genre came, however, as early as 1872, when George Munro included Old Sleuth in his "Fireside Companion." Along with other story papers "Saturday Night" seized on this type of circulation booster. Their versatile contract writer, Edward S. Ellis, was chosen to write a series of detective stories under the by-line, "A United States Detective," which it was later found desirable to augment to read: "E. A. St. Mox, U. S. Detective." Indeed Ellis was sent to Texas, St. Louis and Chicago to write detective stories with local atmosphere, designed to build up the sales of "Saturday Night" in those areas.

After the Davis & Elverson partnership was dissolved, Ellis, despite becoming editor of James Elverson's juvenile story paper, "Golden Days" ceased writing more or less exclusively for that publisher and became a truly free-

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lance writer thereafter.

This is a point worth making because the author was no longer writing to order, virtually as an employee on the staff of the publisher of "Saturday Night." Consequently it is especially interesting to note the large number of detective stories written by Ellis over the next twenty years.

Having regard to, Ellis' not insignificant output of detective stories, an explanation for the relative obscurity of that facet of his literary talent assumes importance in my comprehensive assessment of his writings.

When you study the schedule, which follows this short article, you will notice that a majority of the detective tales by Ellis were published as serials and that only a few of these serials were reprinted in book form. The reason may have been that Ellis achieved his greatest success as a writer for boys and nearly all his detective stories had been written for adults; so they did not attract book publishers.

Another factor limiting the attraction of Ellis' detective story serials to book publishers could have been his failure to concentrate on a particular detective. Old Sleuth, Old Cap Collier, Old Broadbrim and Nick Carter surely owed something of their popularity to their continued appearance in story after story.

Ellis showed a healthy disrespect for the abilities of detectives. Often his detectives jumped to the wrong conclusion and not infrequently ultimate success owed as much to a lucky break as to logical and painstaking deduction. None of his detectives possessed the infallibility of Sherlock Holmes and only one, Orson Oxx, matched the impressive physical prowess of Nick Carter.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that cryptograms, when used in Ellis mysteries, all used the same simple key, namely the moving forward and backward by code of the letters of the alphabet, the stories were by no means uniform in plot or dull to read. Indeed many of them, such as, for example, "The League of the Three" (No. 15) and "Who Opened the Safe" (No. 54) were first class entertainment, with logical plots, lots of action and plenty of suspense.

It is to be regretted that few of the Ellis detective stories are now readily available to members of the HHB; however, if you do come across any, I am sure you will not be disappointed when you read them.

The mail problem in preparing a check list of Ellis' detective stories lay in the definition of what constitutes a detective story as opposed to a story with an element of detection in it. I came to the conclusion that it would be well nigh impossible to arrive at a definition acceptable to you all and so my check list has included all the Ellis works in which a detective is one of the featured characters. That is a very rough and ready rule of thumb and, anyway, the reader does have a brief plot summary of each tale to help him make up his own mind, if he wishes to use a different yardstick.

You will observe that at least six of Ellis' detective stories remain to be read, of which the publication sources of only two—"The Southern Cross" and "The Eye of Hercules"—have so far been found. If you come across any of the other four, all of which seem likely to have been published as newspaper serials, I would greatly appreciate being informed.

There are grounds for suspecting that other major works by Edward S. Ellis, not necessarily all detective novels, may have been published in newspapers, story papers and mail order papers, of which even the titles are as yet unknown. My reason for so thinking is that the publishers rarely bothered to copyright the titles of stories serialized, contenting themselves with the protection accorded by the copyrighting of the individual issue in their entirety.

Thus, if an author sold a story direct to the publisher of a newspaper or periodical, without first copyrighting the title, its very existence would be undiscovered, unless or until it was revealed during a check of the publication in which it was serialized. I mention this point in case any reader comes across an Ellis detective serial, the title of which is not included in the check list; if that happens, I would be very grateful if the details could be sent to me.

Incidentally the following names applied to newspaper serial from about 1880 onwards signify that the author was Edward S. Ellis: J. G. Bethune, M.D., Captain L. C. Carleton, Frank Faulkner, Colonel H. R. Gordon, Captain R. M. Hawthorne, Lieutenant R. H. Jayne, Seward D. Lisle, Geoffrey Randolph, St. Cyr Randolph, Lucie St. Deane, E. A. St. Mox and Egbert S. Thomas.

Our editor helped with this check of Ellis copyright at the Library of Congress and, afterwards, suggested that a discussion of copyright records as an aid to the bibliographer would be useful. Consequently, although copyrights have been covered comprehensively by experts, I am preparing an article for **The ROUND-UP** on the subject, aiming to offer HHB members a simple simple guide with special reference to their value to the research worker.

In the check list, in order to save our editor's precious space, the following abbreviations have been used:

#### Abbreviations Used In This Article

- ADS—American Detective Series (Arthur Westbrook Co., Cleveland, Ohio)
- ALC—A. L. Chatterton Company, New York, N. Y.
- ALL—Armchair Library (F. M. Lupton, New York, N. Y.)
- ATT—Aldine Tip Top Tales (Aldine Publishing Co., London, England)
- B—Dime novel types, black and white or colored covers
- BBR—Boys' Book of Romance and Adventure (Beadle & Adams, New York)
- BDG—Boston Daily Globe (Globe Newspaper Co., Boston, Mass.)
- BFSI—Beadles Frontier Series (M. J. Ivers & Co., New York, N. Y.)
- BFSW—Beadles Frontier Series (Arthur Westbrook Co., Cleveland)
- BH—Boy's Holiday, later The Holiday (Holiday Pub. Co., New York)
- BSA—Berkeley Series (American Publishers Corp., New York)
- BSB—"Budget" Story Books (James Henderson, London, England)
- B8—Beadles Boy's Library of Sport, Story and Adventure—octavo edition
- C—Cassell and Company Limited, London
- CJS—Cassell's Juvenile Series (Cassell Pub. Co., New York)
- CP—Cassell Publishing Co., New York
- C-P—Chatterton-Peck Company, New York
- CSS—Cassell's Sunshine Series (Cassell Pub. Co., New York)
- DF—Beadles Dime Fiction
- DL—Beadles Dime Library
- DLF—Dansk Litteratør Forlag, Copenhagen, Denmark
- DM—David McKay, Philadelphia, Pa.
- DN—Beadles Dime Novels
- FB—Federal Book Co., New York
- FC—Fireside Companion (James Jackson, London)
- FLBGW—Frank Leslie's Boys' and Girls' Weekly
- FLIN—Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper
- FLPH—Frank Leslie's Pleasant Hours
- GR—Golden Argosy, later The Argosy (Frank A. Munsey, New York)
- G&D—Grosset & Dunlap, New York
- GH—Golden Hours (Norman L. Munro, New York)



- GHE—Golden Hours English Edition (Published from Gough Square, London)  
 GHTA—Golden Hours Tales of Adventure (W. Lucas, London)  
 GL—Garfield Library (Aldine Publishing Co., London)  
 GMH—Geo. M. Hill and Company, Chicago, Ill.  
 GN—Good News (Street & Smith, New York)  
 GS—Good Stories (John F. Hill & Co., Augusta, Me.)  
 H&H—Hearth and Home (Peleg O. Vickery, Augusta, Me.)  
 HHr—Happy Hours (John F. Hill & Co., Augusta, Me.)  
 HMC—H. M. Cladwell Company, Boston, Mass.  
 Hst—Hearthstone (Hearthstone Publishing Co., Philadelphia)  
 HTC—Henry T. Coates and Company, Philadeluhia  
 IAN—Irwin's American Novels (Irwin and Company, New York)  
 IDS—Iver's Detective Series (M. J. Ivers and Co., New York)  
 IMS—Idle Moments Series (Price-McGill Co., St. Paul, Minn.)  
 JCW—John C. Winston Co., Philadelphia  
 LCT—Leather Clad Tales of Adventure (U. S. Book Co., New York)  
 LDS—Lovell's Detective Series (U. S. Book Co., New York)  
 LL—London Library (J & R. Maxwell and George Vickers, London)  
 LofF—Library of Fiction (Penny Miscellany Office, London)  
 M—Munro's Ten Cent Novels (George Munro, New York)  
 MC—Merriam Company, New York  
 MED—Medal Library (Street & Smith, New York)  
 MER—Mershon Company, New York  
 ML—Magnet Detective Library/Magnet Library (Street & Smith, New York)  
 NYLed—New York Ledger (Robert Bonner's Sons, New York)  
 OAW—Once a Week Library (P. F. Collier, New York)  
 P—Paperback books or booklets  
 PF—Politken Forlag, Kobenhavn, Denmark  
 PHW—Philadelphia Home Weekly (George W. Childs, Philadelphia)  
 PI—Philadelphia Inquirer (James Elverson, Philadelphia)  
 PN—Beadles Pocket Novels  
 PP—Penn Publishing Co., Philadelphia  
 RM—Rand, McNally and Company, Chicago  
 S—Serial  
 S&S—Street & Smith, New York  
 SLB—Select Library for Boys (American Publishers Corporation, New York)  
 SN—Saturday Night (Davis Elverson, later James Elverson, Philadelphia)  
 SP—Stitt Publishing Company, New York  
 SSh—Snap Shots (James Henderson, London)  
 StN—St. Nicholas Series for Boys and Girls (American Publishers Corp., N.Y.)  
 T—Tait Sons and Company, New York  
 U—Ungdomensbibliotek (Ad. Johnson and Co., Stockholm, Sweden)  
 VFV—Vickery's Fireside Visitor (Peleg O. Vickery, Augusta, Me.)  
 WEE—World Evening Edition (Press Publishing Co., New York)  
 WTN—Weekly Telegraph Novels (Sir W. C. Leng & Co., Sheffield, England)  
 WYPL—Wanamaker's Young People's Library (John Wanamaker, Phila.)  
 YE—Young Englishman (George Emmett, London)  
 ½DL—Beadles Half Dime Library  
 \*AN—Frank Starr's American Novels (Frank Starr and Company, New York)

### The Check List

1. (1) The Marked Bullet; or, The Squaw's Reprieve. A Tale of Border Life by George Henry Prentice (Nov. 15, 1864) 1 DF: P

- (2) The Marked Bullet. Anonymous (ca. 1868) 10 LofF: P
- (3) The Test Shot; or, The Marked Bullet. A Story of a Young Hunter's Skill, by George Henry Prentice (Oct. 22, 1874) 16 BRR: P
- (4) The Death Shot. A Story of a Young Hunter's Life, by George H. Prentice. (Apr. 10, 1877) 219 \*AN: P

An ingenious detective story, in which the Indian squaw of a white settler is saved from being convicted of murder for an accidental shooting at an Ohio house-raising. The detective hero is named Roswell Cuming.

- 2. (1) The Web of Fate; or, The Prairie Trail, by Edward S. Ellis. Nov. 28 to Dec. 19, 1866. PHW Vol. 24 Nos. 49-52: S
- (2) The Prairie Trail. A Tale of the East and the West, by Edward S. Ellis. (Jan. 30, 1867) 24 IAN: P
- (3) Idem. (ca. January 1869). 6 \*AN: P
- (4) On the Trail; or, Tim Bufton, the Trapper, by Edward S. Ellis. (Jan. 25, 1876) 352 DN: P
- (5) Idem. (Nov. 11, 1884) 271 PN: P
- (6) The On-the-Wing Detective; or, Tracking a New York Bank Robber, by Edward S. Ellis. Oct. 20, 1888. 256 B8: B

A chase on horseback across the U. S. A. by a detective (Abram Pelham) in pursuit of a bank robber. The locale shifts from New York to California.

- 3. The Prairie Outlaws. A Romance of the Far West, by Geoffrey Randolph. June 26 to Sept. 11, 1869. SN Vol. VI Nos. 40-51: S

The crimes of the young villain drive the hero and the heroine and their fathers to seek a new life in the West. They also force the villain himself to become a prairie outlaw and bring detectives (Adonijah McGebbin, alias Joshua Cummings, a Quaker and Sgt. McWilliams) out West in pursuit. The action takes place in the Muddy River region of Kansas about 1840.

- 4. The Hidden Treasure, by E. S. Ellis. Sept. 11 to Nov. 20, 1869, FLIN Vol. 28 No. 728 to Vol. 29 No. 738: S

A young lawyer, a gang of robbers, a detective (Adelph Squirrek, alias Rev. J. Skiggs and Richard K. Smith), a judge, a disappearance, a vigilante party, a lynching, an unscrupulous doctor and hidden loot are blended in this first of all the Ellis railway stories. The story ranges from a midwestern state to Chicago and takes place in the late 1860's.

- 5. (1) Florence Gilmore; or, The Mystery of the Sea, by Edward S. Ellis. Dec. 17, 1870 to Feb. 18, 1871, SN Vol. VIII Nos. 13-22: S
- (2) Idem. May 9 to July 11, 1896, SN Vol. XXXIII Nos. 38-47: S
- (3) Idem. ca 1905, 157 ALL: P

By chance the hero saves the life of the heroine, whilst visiting a Pacific island, and so wins her love. The machinations of an evil Mexican who desires the girl and her wealth, keep the lovers apart through many adventures. A detective (John Dodge) on the trail of a gang of counterfeiters helps to reunite them. The action takes place on Milton Island, about two thousand miles west of San Francisco, and in California. The time is uncertain.

- 6. (1) The Midnight Sun. A Romance of Love and Adventure During the Seppoy Rebellion, by Lucie St. Deane. Jan. 20 to April 13, 1872, SN Vol. IX Nos. 18-30: S
- (2) Idem. July 26 to Oct. 18, 1884, Hst Vol. II Nos. 26-48: S
- (3) Idem. April 13 to July 6, 1901, SN Vol. XXXVIII Nos. 35-47: S



The Midnight Sun is a magnificent diamond, which the heroine brings out of India at the time of the Sepoy mutiny. A crook, who bears a striking resemblance to her brother, and his German accomplice join the ship on which the heroine is traveling home to England in order to secure the gem. The crook falls in love with the heroine, but his plans are frustrated by the sudden return of the hero and the heroine's brother, and so he kidnaps the girl. A detective (Burt Bigler) finds her prison and the climax is a fire.

7. (1) Wild Tom of Wyoming, by the Author of "The Hunters," "The Trapper's Retreat." (Dec. 6, 1872) 243 M: P
- (2) Wild Tom, Anonymous. (ca 1881), 91 LL: P
- (3) Wild Tom of Wyoming, by R. L. Wheeler. June 5, 1908, 17 BFSI: P
- (4) Idem. (ca 1912), 17 BFSW: P

The rescue of an abducted maiden from a hired desperado by two detectives (Brown, alias Dolly Varden Dick, a fabrics salesman, and Jones, alias Snooper, Dolly Varden Dick's negro servant), with the aid of an old frontier guide and a young army officer. The action takes place near Fort Havens in Wyoming about 1870.

8. (1) Jim and Joe, Two Brave Boys; or, Upward and Onward, by Edward S. Ellis. Mar. 8 to May 24, 1875, SN Vol. X Nos. 25-36: S
- (2) Jim and Joe, Two Brave Boys, Anonymous. Feb. 24 to March 28, 1902, BDG Vol. LXI Nos. 55-87: S
- (3) Jim and Joe, Two Brave Boys, by Edward S. Ellis. (True Grit Stories No. 2), 1902, HTC: H
- (4) Idem. (1905), JCW: H
- (5) Idem. (1911), (New Library of Famous Books by Edward S. Ellis), JCW: H

The story of two orphans' rise to settlement in life as lawyers, including kidnapping, counterfeiting, the escape of a lion from a circus, the frustrating of a bank robbery, a train collision and detective work. The story is set in Illinois and around Lake Michigan around 1870. The detective's name is Miggs.

9. The Whisky Ring. A Thrilling Tale of the Secret Service, by A United States Detective. Sept. 19 to Nov. 28, 1874, SN Vol. XII Nos. 1-11: S

The bringing of a gang of illicit distillers to justice. The gang operates from the vaults of a church graveyard with the aid of the sexton. The head of the gang covets the sexton's niece. The hero and another inland revenue assessor (Ned Garwood and Alfred Hewitt) rescue the girl from the vault, the hero gaining access inside a coffin and then emerging as a ghost. The final scenes center round an unused hut, to which the hero is pursued. The setting is New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

10. (1) Old Jack's Frontier Cabin, by the Author of "Brimstone Jack," "Texas Joe," Oct. 8, 1874, 291 M: P
- (2) The Indian Queen's Revenge, Anonymous. (ca. 1880), 12 LL: P
- (3) Old Jack's Frontier Cabin, by R. L. Wheeler, May 8, 1908, 13 BFSI: P
- (4) Idem, (ca. 1912), 13 BFSW: P

The central figure in this action packed tale is the villain. Having bought the heroine for silver, he actually "marries" her in a ceremony conducted by an accomplice, posing as a clergyman, while her fiance watches, bound, nearby. The villain also captures and leaves an old lover, bound, to die in a forest and tries to arrange the murder of a young man who helps her. Of course nemesis overtakes the evil man in the end. The action takes place in the settlement of Croatan Lake in an unspecified part

of the Far West. The time is not stated. The name of the detective from Vermont is Buffstone.

11. The Whisky Ring; or, Fighting Fire with Fire, by A United States Detective. Oct. 28, 1876 to Jan. 13, 1877, SN Vol. XIV Nos. 7-18: S
  - (2) Idem. May 31 to Aug. 16, 1884, Hst Vol. II Nos. 28-39: S
  - (3) Pynx, the Detective; or, The Illicit Distillers of Brookville. A Stirring Secret Service Story, by A United States Detective. June 4, to Aug. 20, 1898, SN Vol. XXXV No. 42 to Vol. XXXVI No. 1: S

The head of a gang of illicit distillers abducts the heroine, planning to marry her whilst she is under the influence of drugs. The story then develops into a battle of wits between the villain and a detective (Pincus Pynx, known as The Chicago Bloodhound), the latter having the assistance of the hero and an Irishman. The scene moves between New York City and the country some way up the Hudson River.

12. (1) \$20,000 Reward; or, The Great Vauroo Diamond, by A United States Detective. Jan. 13 to Mar. 31, 1877, SN Vol. XIV Nos. 18-29: S
  - (2) Idem. Mar. 15 to May 31, 1884, Hst Vol. II Nos. 17-28: S
  - (3) The Wauroo Diamond; or, The Result of a Balloon Ascension, by A United States Detective. July 17 to Sept. 26, 1896, SN Vol. XXXIII No. 47 to Vol. XXXIV No. 6: S

An involuntary flight in a balloon and a fire on a river steamer bring the hero, adventure and romance in the search for a famous diamond, which has been stolen from a well known jewelry store in New York. Most of the action takes place in New York state, especially up the Hudson River, although the story opens in Pennsylvania. Zickwolf, alias John O'Gorman, is the detective.

13. (1) Old Invisible. A Tale of Mystery, Adventure and Love, by A United States Detective, June 16 to Sept. 1, 1877, SN Vol. XIV Nos. 40-51: S
  - (2) Idem, Aug. 16 to Nov. 1, 1884, Hst Vol. II Nos. 39-50: S
  - (3) Old Invisible; or, The Todd Gang and the Texans. A Thrilling Adventure Story, by A United States Detective, Sept. 26 to Dec. 12, 1896, SN Vol. XXXIV Nos. 6-17: S

A train is held up by a gang of outlaws, who carry off two of the passengers, one of whom is the heroine. The hero and a detective (Croft, alias Baron Kalb, better known as Old Invisible), posing as a member of the gang, help to bring the robbers to bay in a cabin in the mountains of Texas. There a posse shoots it out with the thieves. The time is 1876.

14. (1) The Iron Eel; or, Joe Stollabird and the Circus, by P. T. Barnum, June 23 to Sept. 8, 1877, FLBGW Vol. XXII No. 557 to Vol. XXIII No. 568: S
  - (2) The Star of the Circus, by P. T. Barnum, July 14 to Nov. 24, 1877, YE Vol. IX No. 223 to Vol. X No. 242: S

The adventurous transformation of a homeless waif into a circus star, coupled with the rounding up of a gang of counterfeiters. This story, which is set in New York City and State, is considered to have been ghosted for the famous showman by Edward S. Ellis. The beefy detective is named Jerningham.

15. (1) The League of Three. A Revelation of New York City Life, by A United States Detective, Sept. 1 to Nov. 17, 1877, SN Vol. XIV No. 5 to Vol. XV No. 10: S
  - (2) Idem, Nov. 1, 1884 to Jan. 17, 1885, Hst Vol. II No. to Vol. III No. 9: S
  - (3) The Broken Honeymoon; or, The League of Three, by A United States



Detective, Mar. 19 to June 4, 1898, SN Vol. XXXV Nos. 31-42: S

A gang of crooks, known as The League of Three, is seeking revenge on an immensely wealthy veteran of the Mexican War for deserting the League years earlier in India. After a burglary, which really does not further the story, the main plot deals with the kidnapping of the veteran's son after his wedding and the many enquiries which lead to his final rescue from drugged captivity. The locale is New York City and the adjacent countryside. The names of the detectives are Blackerton, Jones and Murphy.

16. (1) Hitting the Bull's Eye; or, The Detective in the Northwest, by A United States Detective, Feb. 2 to April 20, 1878, SN Vol. XV Nos. 21-32: S

(2) Idem, Jan. 17 to April 1, 1885, Hst Vol. III Nos. 9-20: S

- (3) Frontier Work; or, The Detective in the Northwest, by A United States Detective, Aug. 20 to Nov. 5, 1898, SN Vol. XXXVI Nos. 1-12: S

A long range Remington rifle, strategy and ingenuity enable the hero/-detective (Fred Montgomery) to bring the heroine's flight from a gang of outlaws to a successful conclusion. Nez Perce and Sioux Indians are also involved and a stupid Dutchman with a chronic cold in the head provides comic relief, including an involuntary ride on a buffalo. The locales are Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri.

(to be continued)

### NEWS NOTES

Mr. Andrew Malec of the University of Minnesota, 309 19th Ave. South, Minneapolis, Minn. 55455 is very anxious to contact anyone with a copy of People's Library No. 334 for research purposes. If any member has a copy I would consider it a personal favor if he would contact Mr. Malec.

Yellowback Library No. 11 contains excellent articles on Dave Fearless No. 12 highlights the White Ribbon Boys, Leo Edwards and more on Dave Fearless and Nancy Drew. The Yellowback Library is published bi-monthly and subscription price is \$8.00. Address 2019 S. E. 8th St., Des Moines, Iowa 50315.

The Mystery and Adventure Series Review has in depth articles on the Toy Nesbitt Books and the Ken Holt Series. This excellent publication is published quarterly and is priced at \$5.00 a year. Address P. O. Box 3488, Tucson, Ariz. 85722.

### LETTERS

Dear Ed:

I was thinking, these past few months, of writing you about an incident that had occurred last summer and which had been spinning about in my head, causing me great confusion and perturbation. The incident to which I refer is the demise of Ross Craufurd. Now, he had paid me a visit personally last summer and he had spoken to me about a set of Merriwells which he had erroneously assumed I had wished to sell. Through a pique of ill-humor in a bad moments, I had jokingly told a long-standing friend who has a book store in the vicinity wherein resided Craufurd, that I wanted to sell my Merriwells. Craufurd mistakenly received this rumor from my friend as gospel truth and so paid me a visit in the hope that he could transact a deal with me. I had become slightly familiar with the name of Ross Craufurd through reading the Dime Novel Roundup, he having written a few articles in same. I have before me "Bibliographic Listing—Our Boys And New York Boys Weekly," by Ross Craufurd—1979—Supplement to The Dime Novel Roundup—February 1979—

Volume 48—No. 1—Whole No. 545. That, of course, was the year 1979. I had never met Mr. Craufurd before and I was, of course, surprised and delighted to have him pay me a visit personally. He was a bit above medium height, slightly stooped, mild, of almost apologetic mein, and soft spoken. My reaction upon meeting him was, in effect: Here was a man literally eating, sleeping, living in the world of Dime Novels, a man who had probably never spent a dull or a boring moment in his seventy or more odd years, a man who, because he owned and had access to thousands of Dime Novels in his possession, was therefore an accredited authority in the several fields in which he took a stand.

In the store I greeted him cordially and we shook hands. He mentioned his name to me and said he arrived from Brooklyn in the hope of acquiring my Merriwells. I steered him gently outdoors into the warm sunshine on the sidewalk. We exchanged a few words. Our brief encounter did not last more than five minutes and, on the sidewalk outside our small but meticulously tidy store-front on the hot summer day, I briefly but gently impressed upon his mind in an almost apologetic tone of voice that I could not part with my boyhood heroes, Frank and Dick Merriwell. (Now, and in future years to come, to the day I drew my last breath, in which direction of life should I or could I seek such fictional or real-life heroes??). Again we shook hands and, for a moment, our eyes met and held. Now his back was turned to me and, in another moment he was walking slowly away toward Second Avenue. I watched and waited. When he was about half way down the block my mind began to clear and I was asking myself: what had I detected or imagined I had detected in his glance? Frustration? Sadness? Bewilderment? Certainly not apathy. A feeling of empathy welled within me as I continued to stare at his retreating figure and, in another few moments he was lost to my view as he disappeared amidst a rushing throng of city people on busy Second Avenue.

Now, several weeks, perhaps two months had passed when I received a visit from my book-store friend and we too chatted outside the same store where I had conversed only recently with Mr. Ross Craufurd. I had known this book-store friend for many, many years and, at one time during the early years of World War II (1942 or 1943) I had procured about thirty-five Nick Carters from him in a bunch for about twenty-five cents a book. (Shades of Inflation!) He had been in a hospital for a serious eye operation and had fortunately survived it well. The conversation, (or monologue) as he continued to relate to me how he had fared and how happy he was to survive the ordeal, ran on and on for about a good half hour and I listened with a bored air when suddenly he mentioned the name of the man who had visited me two months previously. The time element here I may have misjudged but in this story it seems irrelevant. I was shocked and appalled at what I was hearing from my friend's lips. My ears pricked sharply, my eyes bulged in astonishment: "Sure! Hadn't you hear, Al? They found him dead, Al. (His tongue was in high gear now) and all those Dime Novels were out in the street, all over the place! Nick Carters! Merriwells! Algers! Paperbacks! Newspapers strewn all over the streets and they (Dept. of Sanitation) with shovels and hands, kicking and shoveling the stuff onto the truck and kids standing about wondering what the hell kind of Collyer guy had accumulated all this 'garbage' in a house and why all this stuff? Yeah, Al! A street full of paperback books! Years and years of accumulation! Didn't you hear? Algers! Nick Carters! Merriwells! and a few elderly gray-haired guys, perhaps wise to the wealth and value of the 'garbage' ran over with as many cardboard cartons as they could find began to feverishly pack the cartons with as many books as they could fill and hurry away! Didn't you hear, Al? Boy, if you started a bonfire



with all of those books it would reach up to the second or the third floor! I recognized a few owners of book stores who were there and they were having a field day!"

A Field Day In Brooklyn with vintage Dime Novel Paperbacks and Newspapers strewn all about the street. A crowd of bystanders looking on innocently and pathetic and ignorant of the wealth, of the bygone history of our country being shoveled carelessly into Dept. of Sanitation trucks! I stood staring at my friend shocked beyond belief. I could not believe my ears. Was I hearing aright? My senses, all but deadened, I listened for about an hour in utter disbelief. My friend left me after saying good-bye, leaving me standing like a wooden pole. I did not even see him as he departed. Bereft of all feeling I stood still, listening to my feelings rumbling inside me. I had read of the Classic Collyer story here in Harlem in New York City and was familiar with the story, having even seen the outside of the very house and having seen the debris being carted onto the huge Dept. of Sanitation trucks one drizzly day in the year 1942. There were, of course, numerous treasures taken from the house at that time, among them being rare medical books consisting of whole libraries. Was what happened on that Brooklyn street in 1982 a repetition of what happened on that Harlem street in the year 1942? Very old and rare dime novels being shoveled and kicked about and relegated to the garbage heap as fodder for the furnace? For any one who has been collecting Dime Novels throughout the years, painstakingly cataloguing, painstakingly filling in gaps in any long-run series with hard earned dollars, spending endless, precious hours from one's brief sojourn here on earth in ruminating, meditating and merely poring over and deriving hope, strength and inspiration from those wonderful stories of yesteryear—could all those years, could all those dreams, like the puffing out of a candle, like a bursting soap bubble, vanish in one single breath, such as the holocaust of thousands and thousands of Dime Novels on a street in the Borough of Brooklyn? Ross Craufurd will collect no more Dime Novels. Will he begin anew and amass another huge collection in another world??

Ed, can you fill me in on this story and verify, authenticate the passing of Ross Craufurd? I still feel numb and bewildered because, though I had met him personally and but for a few brief moments, I feel a deep, personal loss because of his having spent a few of his precious moments with me and because of his dedication to a wholesome pursuit. I'm sure, he had, upon many an occasion, felt far richer than a J. Paul Getty or a Rockefeller. In a measure, in a small way, I too feel the wealth of my small and limited collection of Dime Novels. My personal dreams are what lifts me up out of my bed each morning and I feel that the effort and the reaching for the dream is what this life is all about. A desire fulfilled is a desire no more. When one reaches the end of the rainbow—what is left beyond that? The Search, the Hunt, the Mirage, if you will of the Ultimate Attainment that always seems just a wee bit out of our immediate reach—this is the Clarion Call of Life.

Forgive me for the lengthy, wild enthusiastic discourse as I am on vacation and I feel free to let loose my energy in every which direction.

—Albert T. Kish

Ed. Note. The above letter contains the most depressing news I've ever received. The Ross Craufurd collection was one of the best in the country. It contained a complete set of Boys of New York, Young Men of America, the personal collection of Francis Doughty. All that is left are the few articles Mr. Craufurd wrote for the Roundup. This sad story points up the fact that all collectors should make provisions for the disposal of their collection.

I would be glad to act for the heirs of any collector in selling or otherwise disposing of collection for their benefit. There have been times when I have visited a widow feeling a little ghoulish because in addition to inquiring about an old friend, I was also interested in finding out what happened to his collection. Often the widow's story was that it was sold to a local book dealer who practically charged her for cleaning out the place. Some sold for as little as 5c each. One heir had piled the collection helter skelter in boxes and many of them had gotten wet. I ended up buying what could be salvaged. So collectors do make provisions for your collection's disposition. Leave instructions in writing, either as part of a will or a letter of instruction. What happened to Ross Craufurd's collections should not happen to yours. E. T. LeBlanc

Dear Eddie:

I received the October issue of Dime Novel Round-Up last week. The article on the Rover Boys by William R. Gowen was very impressive. I can appreciate the research that went into it. Also I was surprised to see you state that the Alliance Book on Frank Merriwell by Gilbert Patten was exceedingly rare. I recently acquired a copy of it at a book sale near here. One of these days when I get some time I am going to have to read some of my Merriwell collection.

However that is not why I am writing this letter. A week ago I went to Newark to attend a convention of old time radio. I really enjoyed myself there. They had invited about thirty actors who worked on radio and they reminisced about their experiences. They got together and recreated a number of shows by reading from the scripts. It was a delightful time. At the convention I picked up a copy of the enclosed flier. I am not sure but it would seem to me that some of your readers might like to know about such an event. So I am passing the information on to you. You can use it to suit your editorial policy.

"Plans are now being made for a Lone Ranger 50th Anniversary Commemorative Convention. It will be held near the end of January, 1983 near Philadelphia. This will be an unofficial affair, as the present owners of the property have stated that they have no plans for 1983.

"At a minimum, there will be: Two days of fun. — Some of the world's most complete memorabilia collections on display. — Other Western hero collections. — 'Special' collectables. — Ranger movies and tapes to watch. — Radio dramas to listen to. — The very 1st Lone Ranger radio script to see and study if you like. — Special guest speakers. — Segments of the 1938 Republic Lone Ranger Serial to watch. — And much more.

"If you would like more complete information just as soon as it's available write to Fran Striker Jr., P. O. Box 832, Lansdale, Pa. 19446."

Sincerely, Albert Tonik

Dear Eddie:

Back about February or March I sent you a postcard regarding the death of J. P. Guinon. I finally talked with his niece who lived at 2214 Louisiana, Little Rock. She said he died in September 1981. According to his cousin, he sold all of the Tip Top Weeklies a long time ago. After his wife died he sold the books. He was suffering from Parkinson's disease and when the house he lived in was taken for the freeway he moved into an apartment near his niece.

Audrey Buffington

Sorry to have this news published so late. Guess the postcard slipped through a crack in the desk. Ed.



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# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

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A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the  
old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers

Vol. 51, No. 4

August 1982

Whole No. 556

## Frank Merriwell's Hundredth Birthday

By David Soibelman



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 228

STARRY FLAG SERIES

Publisher: Street & Smith, 79-89 Seventh Ave., New York, N. Y. Issues: 6.  
Dates: Oct. 12, 1916 to Dec. 28, 1916. Schedule of Issue: Semi-monthly. Size:  
7x4 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Pages: 250-280. Price: 10c. Illustrations: Colored pictorial cover.  
Contents: Reprinting of the 6 Optic stories of the Starry Flag Series originally  
published by Lee & Shepard in 1868.

## Frank Merriwell's Hundredth Birthday

By David Soibelman

(Submitted for publication in the April 1996 issue of DNR, but editor couldn't wait.)

I mailed a letter today to my friend, Ed LeBlanc of Fall River, the head man of the national Happy Hours Brotherhood whose members collect, preserve and reminisce about the dime novels of their youth. I complained that April 18 had passed without a word written or spoken about that day as the 100th birthday of Frank Merriwell, the greatest hero in modern juvenile literature.

Newspapers and broadcasters did mark the day with accounts of the 1906 San Francisco fire-cum-earthquake but not a syllable was said about the noble character whose feats on and off the athletic fields and in the faroff places of the world made reading of the 5-cent Tip Top Weekly a must for generations of boys. I'm happy to say I was one of them.

Frank Merriwell was the most popular (popular, my eye; he was the most admired) mythic figure in American juvenile literature from the late 19th Century to the mid 20s of the 20th Century. I had hoped Mayor Tom Bradley would proclaim April 18 as Frank Merriwell Day, the City Council and the Board of Supervisors would adopt resolutions in tribute, collectors and book dealers would enjoy a Merriwell dinner at the Biltmore Hotel, the Yale Alumni Association would conduct a lodge of sorrow to note his passing, and that the book reviews of the nations would do right by him. But no. The day passed into the bleak vault of history without a proper do for him.

Frank Merriwell first appeared on the literary scene on April 18, 1896 when he was a 16-year-old plebe at Fardale Military Academy. His creator Burt L. Standish (born W. Gilbert Patten) wrote some 20,000,000 words in 986 "dime novels" which narrated the moral paragon's triumphs in athletics, adventures, loves and righteousness, and in all other activities you can imagine every week for nearly 30 years with \$150 as his top check for a story.

I have read hundreds of these stories, own a collection of 65 originals, and have followed the peerless one's career through reprints, rivals and the weighty and wordy analyses of professors of English and the cosmic comments of amused anthropologists. Therefore I understand why he was read so avidly and still is treasured by many. He was the True Hero, a credible figure, albeit fictional, to his readers, and he became synonymous with the virtues and athletic and other skills his readers wished they could emulate.

Who was Frank Merriwell and why do so many elderly men today breathe wistfully the melancholy air of nostalgia at the sound or the sight of his name? Because there never was anyone like him. Not even today.

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